

LESLEY CORBETT

A CHANGE IN THE WEATHER



UTSIDE lightning splits the night. In the flyscreen enclosure she sits rocking in her chair, bare feet thudding softly on the timber. The sleeping child half wakes, sucks at her breast, making little slurping noises.

There is nothing to this house. Just the one corrugated iron room and this flyscreened enclosure with a bit of a verandah. The elements enter it unsoftened.

She wipes the sweat from her forehead. Little rivulets run between her breasts. Her skin is clammy where the child sticks to her. He is asleep again, his mouth still on her nipple. Now and again he chews at it in his sleep.

The whirring fan moves the hot moist air. It brings no relief. Outside there is stillness, that strange calm that grips the world before the clouds break open. A long way off thunder grumbles.

She waits, hand brushing away the insects that make their way to her despite the netting, finding every hole and tear in it. Outside myriad insects cling to the flyscreen. Clouds of white ants are on the wing. Trails of them, mostly wingless by now, make their way under the door and crawl towards places unimagined in their night flight. The ants make her think the rain will fall this time.

She waits.

Two years they have waited. The red dirt cracks in crazy paving across the landscape. The withered trees whisper with dry leaves. A fine red dust settles on everything.